

Center for Modern Greek Studies
Greek American Oral History Project
Transcription

Tape:

Subject: Evangelos Gerontinos
Interviewer: Mary Nicholson Goldworth
Date of Interview: 09/06/2001

Transcriber: Amanda Cookson
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Counter: 000

Goldworth: This is the Oral History for Dr. Angelos Gerontinos//

Gerontinos: Evan-, Evangelos, Evangelos Gerontinos.

I: Sorry, thank you. Ok Evangelos, E-V-A-N-G-E-L-O-S//

G: Correct.

I: Gerontinos, G-E-R-O-N-T-I-O-N-S.

G: No, G-E-R-O-N-T-I-N-O-S.

I: N-O-S.

G: Yeah, you, you reversed a couple of letters when you mentioned it.

I: Oh really? Oh, ok.

G: You had it correct//

I: Yeah, ok. And the the {006} is done, dictated to that to Mary Nicholson Goldworth. G-O-L-D-W-O-R-T-H for the Modern Greek Studies Center at San Francisco State University and the project is Greek American Archive, being this is recorded at the home of Dr. Gerontinos and this is the tape number one <clears throat>. What would you say lead you to consider yourself to be of Greek heritage?

G: What leads me to {015}

I: Yes. To have some, what is it that is on your mind//

G: //I guess it was//

I: To rejoin {016}

G: I guess it was the instruction from way back when I was young and my parents wanted me to join youth organizations at the church, at the AHEPA I was a sons of Pericles and from then on I I learned about the culture of the Greeks and I accepted it because it was very interesting to me and of course I couldn't accept any thing else, my parents were Greek! Of course I just fell right along with it and as I read about or talks about Greece, Greeks, ancient Greeks and whatnot I said to myself "I have a

very interesting history.” Even though I wasn’t living at that time. And this is what, and of course I’ve been to the AHEPA, Hellenic American Professional Society, Democritos society and I guess that’s about it in the Greek organizations and I’ve been in them right along and I say many times that I’m a Hellene instead of a Greek. A Greek is a word that I guess the Romans gave to the ancient Greeks, as I understand it.

I: So there was something that was established a long time back//

G: //From the time I was young.

I: {031} Even growing up and being American born//

G: //Yes, yes, you’ve got it just right.

I: Just to get back to your, our agenda. So we haven’t talked about your grandfather and mother but actually your father and your mother were both Greek born and that would be the generation that we can fill in a little bit to make the switch over to the United States because they were both in that situation {035} immigrants. You said that your father was born in Smyrna and//

G: Smyrna, yes.

I: Smyrna, we can say it either way I can imagine//

G: We do not use the word “Izmir” because that is a Turkish word!

I: Turkish word, yeah. So Smyrna is//

G: Smyrna.

I: Yes and it’s it is I thought it would be spelled S-M-Y-R-N-A//

G: //Smyrna.

I: In English.

G: Yes, yeah.

I: And your mother was born in on the island of Samos <laughs>

G: {040}

I: //Internal village it was not seaside//

G: Yes.

I: About//

G: You know my mother's village?

I: Well, yes I think you did give that to me.

G: I probably did.

I: You might as well just share it with//

G: Well my mother was born on Samos on the village of, of a, of a,
<expresses frustration>

I: {045}

G: {045}

I: I wasn't sure how to spell it//

G: I don't know how to spell it it just, you have to write it down phonetically
and if you're going to write it down.

I: Yes. Ok well I'll just leave it in the family notes here that the {048}.

G: Alright.

I: And anyway so they were both born in some part of, some Greek type of
community//

G: Yeah//

I: //Whether it was occupied//

G: //They were born at that time and in the area that was considered part of
Greece.

I: When your father was born was Smyrna considered part of Greece?

G: No//

I: I thought it would have been still Turkey.

G: No, it wasn't part of Turkey yet. Let's see, no I'm sorry because after the
war and the German lost and of course the Germans were part of it the

Greeks occupied the Western coast of Turkey which included Smyrna and of course they called that, all amount “This is Greece.” And at that time it was considered Greece and then in 1922 during the Holocaust at that time the Turks moved, just moved//

I: // {057}

G: Occupied, they went and kicked the Armenians and the Greeks out and did all kinds of slaughters and whatnot. History will tell you what they did and it became part of Turkey. But my father was here at that time because that Holocaust was in 1922 when my father left Smyrna it was part of Turkey. And the Greeks occupied that area after the war I guess it was included into some kind of treaty that that was made at that time.

I: Well if you were to give, make a statement as to what to lead your father to leave Smyrna and you said {065} you said before that the that he was about 14 or 15 years old//

G: //Exactly//

I: When he came to the United States but then it was it must have been some time around 1910 or 12 what, what was//

G: //That’s that’s right//

I: //The rivalry//

G: It certainly was before 1922 before the Holoc-, Holocaust. Yes, my father came to this country but before that//

I: So, yeah, what led him to leave?

G: Well let me tell you a little bit of interesting history here. My father wanted to become, he worked in the church when he was young, he worked as αν εκκλησιάρχης {072}, you know he took care of the church, this and that and all that business and he wanted to become a monk. Well, ok fine that ok my, his parents ok. And they gave them money to leave the country. He wanted to go to Agio Oros {076} I don’t know where it//

I: //In Greece

G: In Greece. Well, while he was waiting for a boat to take him across, I don’t know where it would take him over and on the dock there there was a Turk sitting down there. It was a Turk. I knew his name and he saw my father and he says “young fellow, what are you doing here on the docks?”

What are you doing here with all these grownups?" He says, "I'm going to become a monk I'm going to Agio Oros, you know the monastery up there." And the Turk said to him "Don't you go there! Do not go there. You go back home and do some other kind of work, you look for something else to do because the abbot up there mistreats young boys." What that means, well you can imagine. My father got frightened, says "you go back..." Well he went back home and of course his mother says "Oh what are you doin' back here?" He says, "Well, this is the experience I had." Well the next thing is my father got some gold pieces and whatever they were and they left and they, he was leaving the country and coming over here to the United States.

- I: What prompted to leave though, why didn't he want to stay?
- G: I guess he was adventuresome I suppose. A lot of Greeks have left you know but who know what reason?
- I: Yeah, right, right, right.
- G: To get, for a better life!
- I: Yeah <laughs> that's why we're asking! {091}
- G: Yeah, for a better life.
- I: Yeah.
- G: I guess he was adventuresome. I talked to him about this and he tells me {093} I'm gonna see the world. Yeah.
- I: Yeah. And so then you did mention that he in the past are really {095} and you said something about his settling in the area of Connecticut and Massachusetts.
- G: This is kinda vague with me but he did go Connecticut, Masschusetts, first he was in New York and//
- I: Where was he, when did he arrive, his point of arrival?
- G: I don't know but he came through Ellis Island//
- I: //Ellis Island, ok.
- G: And the whole bit//
- I: //That's where I meant {100}

G: And that he, he, he finally established himself in Connecticut at this point it's Thompsonville, Connecticut because it was there that he met my mother. In a romantic situation.

I: Yes I would like to ask you about that you said there was a special story about it. Ok and so then can we trace back to your mother's departure from Greece and her arrival in the country, you said she was from Samos//

G: //From Samos.

I: And then she, what prompted her to leave there?

G: I don't know.

I: Born in 1880, you think.

G: Yeah, in, in that time yes. I, I'd have to look up the records to find out but it was something latter 18-, in the 1890s, let's say that.

I: Oh 1890s.

G: Yeah.

I: And then can you pinpoint about when she left there and came to the United States.

G: I don't know that. But she left there with her sister to come to the United States.

I: And what//

G: //Why they left//

I: And what prompted, yeah, what prompted her to leave?//

G: //I, I, I, I don't know. That is something I don't know. But, it was very interesting they, they carried their gold pieces out in their breast, they had gold pieces. And whenever they wanted anything they'd pull this out and give it to the person they for favors and all that stuff. And they were on the ship I remember she told me the ship was an Italian sh-, the Italian ship <moans> I can't remember the name of the Italian ship.

I: It's ok.

G: And while they were on the ship my mother and her sister they cultivated friendships with other Greek people who were coming across and then when they, they get they had no sponsor but they had the money to pay to get on the ship. They wanted to go to America for what reason, I don't know. So when they came to the point when they were ready to disembark at Ellis Island because they didn't have a sponsor they said "you people have to go back to Greece." My mother told her sister "I'm not gonna go back go Greece we spent all this money and so forth and.." He said, her sister "Well we've got to go back, we can't do, we can't cheat you know and all that stuff." He says, "Well you can go back." So my mother went and got, they were wearing some kind of a tag, my sister told me the whole story. Wearing some kind of tag it was green it meant "go" if it was white it means you go back. When my, so my mother went over there and her {134} green card, a green tag and she put that on and she talked to some of these Greek people that she befriended on the boat and they said, "My child, stay with us, we'll have a sponsor for ya." These people had a sponsor I don't know who these people were. So my mother got off of Ellis Island with this person who's sponsoring these other Greeks also included my mother in the, in the group and they ended up in New York. {141} New York, my mother was, I don't know how, she was in a hotel place or someplace with other Greek girls who came over. And then one day they told her "look," they says, "you gonna, we gotta a job for you but you gotta have to get on the train you're gonna have to go to Thompsonville, Connecticut, that's where the carpet mills are and all that stuff but it's gonna cost you so much money..." Well my mother pulled out a few more gold pieces from her inside the cleft of her breast what she had, she had them hanging in there, I don't know how in a bag or whatever it was. And ok she got on a train with a couple of other girls, two that were going to the same place, they had jobs because the Greeks that were here already wanted to help those that were coming over. And she got a job at the Burlington Mills in Thompsonville, Connecticut. I guess that was Burlington Mills I'm not sure what it was a carpet, it was a carpet mill and she lived in a sort of an apartment house with other Greek girls and that's how she got here and you want me to continue on how she met my father?

I: Well, then then will come next but let's see <interviewer laughs> your father in the meanwhile, how did he support himself?

G: He established himself, first he was working for some of the Greek, I don't know how the story is behind it, but he worked for some Greek people in a restaurant business and he, he picked it all up. He knew {158} he says "well I can do this myself" and he opened up a restaurant in Thompsonville, Connecticut and that's where he established himself and he lived there, he had an apartment where he was staying, that's the. And then from there they, they, they after he married my mother they

established another restaurant in Lowell, Massachusetts and he ended in Springfield, Massachusetts, West Springfield, Massachusetts, Great Barrington, Massachusetts he had he had about seven restaurants. He couldn't handle them all and you know it's but he had, then he'd sell and then scope on up another one. And...

I: So he did, so he was able to manage?

G: Yeah, yeah, he was//

I: <interruption>

G: He was in, he ended up in the restaurant business, yeah.

I: Well//

G: You wanna know how he met my mother?

I: Yes, that would be my next question.

G: Ok, this, this is kind of romantic.

I: Ok you did bring them together in the same location and you said something in earlier history that you mentioned there was some story about a {171} or was that//

G: No, not there wasn't//

I: There was not.

G: No there wasn't any {172} at all, yeah.

I: Oh ok.

G: That's, that's the//

I: <interruption>

G: //conventional way, there's no {174} at all//

I: //Ok.

G: ...as I understand it.

I: Yes.

G: Let me tell you this story. My mother it was a rainy night they think I don't, rainy night you know that's some {176} but it was raining after they got off of work, my mother and she was waiting underneath where the door was, someplace to stay out o the rain. She didn't have an umbrella waiting for the bus to come and she'd go out and get on the bus and that would take her to wherever she was staying. Well my father had a restaurant just, just beyond the, the carpet mill, he was smart enough to establish a restaurant in a place where people during the lunch hour or whatever, they'd come out and they'd go to a lunch and the lunch room and get something to eat, see. Well my father closed his restaurant and he was walking by and he saw my mother and he didn't know she was Greek or anything and he gestured and he said, "Bus is coming, bus, do you want to get under my umbrella." So she, "yes," she said, she nodded her head and he escorted her to the bus stop where she got on the bus and therefore he got on them too and then he got off someplace my mother was still on the bus. Well, that was interesting. My father he was a member of the Greek Orthodox Church in the city there and he was a psalty, a psalter and he was always up there in the front where all these during the liturgy and all that. And he was up there one Sunday, I don't know how long it was from the time of the//

I: //the umbrella.

G: The, the umbrella in {197} and the bus and all that and he was there and he looked up and he saw my mother coming into the church. My future mother and he told this other guy, he said "take over, <laughs>, you know I saw someone here." And he went over there and he went, and the women were on one side and the men on one side way back then in the church and he went over and he sat next to her and he said "why didn't you tell me you were Greek." She says, "who are you?" He says, "I'm the guy who thought, at, you know, I'm the guy that escorted you to the bus stop during the rainy night on such and such." "Oh my God!" my mother said, "oh my goodness." And this is the way it started. At least that's a romantic, I don't know, I guess it's probably more romantic stuff.

I: <mumbling>

G: But there was no {208} and they and that way they after singing {209} and all that business and they got married in Lowell, Massachusetts.

I: I mentioned a date they were married in, let's see I'm not sure I got that, when your parents were married, it doesn't, it doesn't matter. We know that, that they did and that they, you were one of three children.

G: Yes.

I: And you were the oldest one.

G: Yes. Yeah.

I: And the story would unfold starting with your life now. What can you maybe you should give us a location, where the years where you were growing up, where were you and could you describe anything that comes to mind about being your, your early childhood in your school//

G: I was born, I was born in Springfield, Massachusetts//

I: Yeah.

G: My father had a restaurant, he in Springfield, I can't recall on West Springfield, Massachusetts, they were close by. And//

I: //Your date, you could tell us your date of birth here this would be//

G: //1926.

I: 1926, yeah.

G: And all I know is that I did a lot of moving around because my father said "well I've got a restaurant out in Great Barrington" and we'd have to move to Great Barrington. In other words he wanted to live close to where the business was. And I guess that's about all I can say on that but we did a lot of moving around, I remember that because of my father's business. And I remember once a year I'd have a different school I'd go to. This was during my elementary school years.

I: Which must have been during the '30s.

G: That's right. '30s, then the early '40s, well we sort of stopped moving around in the '40s. We established ourselves in Springfield, Massachusetts.

I: when you were of that age what other kinds of activities did you take part in, did you have, you did have affiliation with the church you said.

G: Affiliated with the church//

I: //How so {237}

G: I was affiliated with the Sons of Pericles and the//

I: //Yeah.

G: AHEPA. And I didn't do much of anything else I was a member of the boys club, member of the YMCA.

I: Just your everyday life//

G: //That's right, yeah. There was nothing extraordinary, my folks wanted me to sit down and read and write and whatever they. I went to Greek school, first we had an instructor at the house but as we moved to a place where we were closer to the church they had a Sunday, they had a Greek school there so they sent us to Greek school. And there weren't a lot of other Greek kids there and we fell along with it and that was it. And {249}//

I: //What kind of studying did you do in Greek? What, what//

G: //Just a lot of//

I: You said you had a tutor at first//

G: //At first, yes, to teach us the Greek language, how to write and how to speak. We got that more formal manner at the Greek school which was under the at the Church.

I: Yeah.

G: It's <laughs> when it comes to//

I: It was reading and spelling and//

G: //That's right.

I: ...writing and speaking.

G: That's right, yeah. And of course in my in our home my father said that when you're in, when you're in this side of the threshold, you're in Greece. I want you to speak Greek, when you're on the other side of the threshold you speak English.

I: Where did he want you to speak Greek?

G: In the house.

I: At home, ok.

G: At home.

I: Oh yes.

G: {261} If we had non-Greeks in the home for some reason or another then of course we'd all speak English because it wouldn't be fair he said to speak in a foreign tongue in front of strangers.

I: So you all spoke Greek at home then?

G: That's right, yes. We spoke Greek at home. Oh yes, if I said something in English I had a question to ask my mother or my father they wouldn't even they'd act as though they didn't hear me. And if I spoke in Greek they were, my dad would answer my question.

I: Did your, of course your father did speak English//

G: //Yes.

I: ...but did your mother learn English?

G: Yes my mother it's interesting. My mother, because she came here sort of for one of a better word, "illegally."//

I: //Some-, somewhat.

G: She yeah she you know jumped ship. Came in with these Greeks who took her, took her under their {274} and had this other sponsor accept her. She did not want to become a citizen because she was afraid that they would catch her and send her back. And for and for years my father said "look, you're my wife," he says, "and you can be my," she said, "no, no, no, no they might fight something and they'll send my back even if my wife..." My mother was very, very suspicious of the, of this because she knew so. Remember she used to say "I don't care what happens as long as {283} my youngest brother as long as he gets out of high school then they can do anything they want with me, then I'll become a citizen, they can do anything they want with me." So let all this prance by {285}. Finally, she became a citizen after all these years, all those years. But she wouldn't become a citizen and didn't tell anybody her history and all that and she talked about the {289} but then she changes subjects so it wouldn't get too deep into her history and she I guess was very, very careful.

I: She's protecting her family.

G: Yeah, that's right because if they took her send her out or something send her, but probably they wouldn't have done that because you become

automatic but the thing is because she came in illegally they might have still caused a, a problem for her. And so she didn't become a citizen for quite a while.

I: Wha-, how did your father what what led to your father becoming a citizen? Making that decision?

G: I, I, I don't know. I guess he came here and he wanted to become a citizen. And he always used to tell me, friends t hat he met and this is respect his countries, the best country in the world, we have beautiful freedom here. And he used to talk about things were better here and they were in Greece or Turkey or whatever. And//

I: //Could you explain a little bit more or you remember any specific//

G: //No, no I do-//

I: //occasions when//

G: //No, all I know that he//

I: //That, when he was explaining what he was telling about what he valued about being here.

G: He valued the freedom.

I: But freedom of what?

G: That we have here in this country.

I: What kind of freedom, what he referring to do you think?

G: I know freedom is a broad term.

I: Yeah.

G: It he didn't specifically state. I'm free to open a restaurant or I'm free to do this or free-, freedom you could do all this stuff as long as it was within the law. Nothing, nothing, no stories on that.

I: Yeah. What, how do you think he thought it was different from where he was growing up in Turkey, Greece, Turkey?

G: I//

I: //Is there any...

G: He never wanted to tell me any of the//

I: //Didn't want to talk about it//

G: Any of the, any of the things like that. They were very protective of us and he used to say nevermind about that stuff, enjoy yourself here, do what's right, get your education, do that, nevermind what, nevermind what I did or whatev-, whatever was going on over there. I said "pop this is history." He said "nevermind, you do this and then you can learn the history later on." He didn't come, come {328}

I: It was not something that he wanted to.

G: Yeah, he felt that that stuff wouldn't contribute to my education//

I: //to your education//

G: //Or my growing up. He didn't wanna tell me about how bad the Turks were//

I: They were not, they were not pleasant stories then.

G: I, that's what I assumed <interruption> that they'd that he didn't wanna tell me of what the Turks did to the Greeks. And vice versa of course. And he never wanted me to learn how to play cards or play dice or gamble. I went home one time and I asked him, I said "Pop," I said, "over there at the AHEPA", the Sons of Pericles at this time, I said, "I see these guys playing cards and I see..."

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Counter: 000

G: Well, like I was saying my I told, I asked my father "how do you, how do you, how do you, how does this game of dice go and how do these cards go?" And he told me, he says, "you don't need to know that stuff to get along in your life, you just go to school, get a good education, do the best you can and what you want to do in life you'll know when the time comes." He says "but you don't need to know how to play cards." And to this day I don't know how to play cards well I'll do the one-armed {005} in Reno and <laughs> Las Vegas any fool can do that. But I don't know how to play cards.

I: Mhmm. That was your father's decision about//

G: //Yep//

I: //what was important.

G: Yeah, yeah that's right. Yeah.

I: I doubt you//

G: //May I interject another thing what he//

I: //Yeah, sure.

G: When I was being drafted to go into the army, they called me together and you know he said "now you're leaving tomorrow, next week" I forgot what it was, I think it was, you're going to go in the army. He says, "we want you to treat everybody fair and square like we treated you and you're going to meet a lot of people. Be fair with them. If someone is bad, go away, get away from them. Treat the woman like you want people to treat your mother and your sister. And be nice..." Everything was good but he said "there's one thing we don't want you to do." I said, "oh my God I wonder what the heck that could be." He said, "we don't want you to get a tattoo." He didn't want me to get a tattoo because they knew I guess guys go in the army they get tattoos and all. I wasn't thinking of getting that anyway. I says, "ok fine, that's it. But that was interesting, you know." And then they told me this, told me what, another thing he says, "go to a church, even if it's not a Greek church. Go to church, try to go to church every Sunday and wherever you are in the army if they have a church for the soldiers you go there too. Go, keep up your faith in God and Jesus Christ." So I went along with that stuff and but I would never, I never, I would never think that he told me not to get a tattoo, I thought of every other I thought he was going to tell me not to go with women or something like that <laughs> but that that's an interesting thing//

I: //Well, those, those are words the kinds of little situations that stay with you and//

G: //That's right, this is part <interruption>, this is part of what the Greek want their children to absorb.

I: We mentioned being in the service and I'd like to ask you some more about that but before we do that you said quite a bit about your higher education after high school.

G: Yeah.

I: Yeah and I'd//

G: //After high school//

I: //I'd like you to fill that in.

G: Well I would//

I: //That was before you went into the service//

G: //That's right. I went for one year I decided to go into physical education. I liked exercise and I was impressed by athletics and stuff like that. And I was in college one, well I'd say I was in college about six months during my freshman year when I got my notice to be drafted. And I presented myself to the draft board and I said, I said, "Gentlemen," three old geezers were sitting down there <laughs> {034} they were looking at my papers you know. And I said "I'm willing to go in but I've got six months, a few months." I forgot what it was to finish these, my last semester for my, finish my year, I'd like to have that before I go because they were gonna pull me in before I finished the year, the, the freshman year.

I: What, what year was that now?

G: This is in 1945.

I: '45.

G: So I//

I: //Just before the war was over.

G: The war was still going on//

I: //Before the summer.

G: {040} April I think it was. Whatever it was, well whatever it was//

I: //it was in the spring.

G: The Japanese, when I went in we still had the war with the Japanese. So I they told me to wait outside in the office there then finally there was a buzz on the telephone the secretary went in, she came out and says "ok you go home, finish your school year." Well I'm tellin' you they knew when it was finished and boy, during that week I got my papers to report and I went in, I went in June 15, 1945 into the service.

I: They called you into service even though the European//

G: That's right because we still had the war with the Japanese <interruption> Anyway I was in the I was in for two years and I got out in June, 1947 and then I finished my college, I got my Bachelor's degree, I got my Master's degree and I came out and got a job and then while I was out here I, I was clinical professor of Adaptive P.E.

I: What year was that?

G: {051}

I: It had to be//

G: //It had to be in the//

I: //'40s?

G: '60s, in the '60s.

I: Oh.

G: Yeah and I was Chief of Therapy over at the {052}. I ended up at Chief of Therapy at the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center and I retired from all this in late 1983 and then I got a job at the YMCA.

I: Oh you skipped your years at San Jose State!

G: Oh it was just where I had, I was clinical professor I had students there who wanted to go into Adaptive P.E. work so we had to teach them about that and take them to different hospitals, different rehabilitation centers so they could see how they could apply the principles, techniques and whatnot of physical education and working with the handicapped and disabled.

I: So most of you work was kind of {061} it was out in the field with the students//

G: //With the students, yeah I was a clinical professor and we, we had these, we called them interns at that time. Yep. It was interesting because some of the students that I had are now heads of their departments at Foothill College, De Anza College, {065}, I don't know where else. So I feel proud of that.

I: Yes. What led you to choose {066} as your field?

G: Well when I was at Springfield college I as I took health and physical education then when I got my master's they came out with this new rehabilitation application of physical education to the handicapped and disabled which they were using for a wounded veterans and so forth and I said and that's what impressed me. And I decided to go into that hill of application of physical education to the handicapped and disabled. And I went down to UCLA and I worked on my doctorate and I got that and, and of course that gave me more money, that was mainly the motivation for it and satisfied.

I: You said something about getting the degree but commuting?

G: That's right, I was commuting. I was coming up from here, down there. It was, it was a, I didn't have to do a thes-, a dissertation, I took extra courses. And they gave me an Ed.D on it.

I: Oh so you were located here in Palo Alto, in, in Mountain View//

G: //That's right, yeah.

I: And so you//

G: It took, it took me, it took me about two, three years to, to complete this.

I: How did you {082} so often did you drive down?

G: No I usually flew down.

I: Flew down.

G: Yeah, it's, it was ok. I was making, you know, good money at the V.A. so.

I: So then that was, you said you retired in 19-, in 19//

G: 1983.

I: '83.

G: Yeah.

I: So, until then, for quite a few years you were doing your work in//

G: //I was doing my work, yeah.

I: You know I made a note that you at some point when you were, I guess you were in college at the time, you won some awards as a..

G: Oh yeah I could, I could show you some pictures//

I: What did you <laughs>//

G: //I could show you some pictures//

I: Tell about that, that, charming.

G: Well, let's see. When I was in, in junior high I was pretty good at tennis. And I became junior city tennis champion and I also was in, I also was in bowling, golf, swimming. The main thing was body building and weight lifting and to make a long story short I ended up as a, well first, Mr. Western Massachusetts, Mr. Massachusetts and then Mr. New England and then 10th place, 10th runner up in Mr. America. And I just did this but then when I got my job, came out, I sorta slacked off and I went into {097} I wasn't practicing what I preached so I but I did that and while I was in college I was in gymnastics, wrestling and track. What else...

I: Well, that's, that's quite a list you have there. So, so much for your filling in the information about your education and occupation. I'd like to go back to the point where you and your wife met and, and got married and had your family.

G: Ok that was, that was what they might say is a {106}.

I: Oh that's where that is.

G: Yeah, yeah, but it was a, it was my buddy at Springfield College, John Coronapis. And when he knew that I was coming out to California he said to me, he said "Well I want you to meet this girl out there in California and she lives in Los Angeles and she, she does work in the movie industry." I said, "What do you mean, what kind of mov-." He says "Well, she's {111} acting at the//

I: You mentioned Pasadena Playhouse.

G: Pasadena Playhouse//

I: //Is that the one?

G: She did and she also did character acting in regular movies. It wasn't anything great <laughs>. If she heard me now she'd probably say, "what do you mean it wasn't great." <laughs>

I: Would you, just let's go back to the {114} for the people who are listening who may not know//

G: //Oh ok. It//

I: //How do we spell that? P-R-O-X-E-N-I-A//

G: <sounds out "proxenia"> Proxenia, X-E-N-I-A.{116} //

I: //N-I-A. Yes.

G: Proxenia.

I: Yes.

G: It means this, he wrote a letter to her and let's see. I gotta and I wrote a letter to her and she wrote back to me. You know, he wrote and then I wrote to her also and you probably heard from John and all that stuff and I'll be down there and I'd like to meet you and get together. So that's how that started and actually/

I: So proxenia means "arranged"?

G: That's, well I'm getting it//

I: //"Arranged" or, or maybe "broken."//

G: //well that's right he fixed me up in a way, yeah. So actually before we got married we only saw each other eye ball about four times and the fifth time we got married in the cathedral in Los Angeles.